

**To: Leadership Board**

**On: 19 June 2024**

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**Report by: Chief Executive**

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**Heading: Marketing and Communications Strategy 2024-27**

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## **1. Summary**

1.1 The report sets out for Elected Members the council's Marketing and Communications Strategy 2024-27.

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## **2. Recommendations**

2.1 Members are asked to note the report.

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## **3. Background**

3.1 The council's Marketing and Communication Strategy 2024 to 2027 sets out the priority actions for the service through to 2027, informed by situation analysis, audience research and the council plan (2022-2027).

3.2 The Marketing and Communications Service lead several strategies for the council, which combine to support delivery of an over-arching Marketing and Communications Strategy, as well as delivering their own objectives. This includes:

- Internal Communication and Engagement strategy
- Digital Experience Strategy
- Other policies and protocols that guide corporate communications including the media protocol
- Social Media Strategy

- Accessibility guidance

The service also leads wider place-related strategy – the council’s Major Events Strategy, cultural regeneration through Future Paisley, and the promotion of Renfrewshire as a great place to live, work and visit. Collectively, the strategies reinforce the council brand and the role of the council as a place leader. The Marketing and Communications Strategy also contributes to the council’s statutory obligations as part of Renfrewshire Council’s Gaelic Language Plan.

3.3 The purpose of the Marketing and Communications Strategy is to drive awareness of the council brand, demonstrate the council’s ongoing progress to deliver the Council Plan (2022 to 2027) - ‘to create a fairer Renfrewshire built on innovation, wellbeing and opportunity’, and to promote opportunities for citizens to shape the services they need. This requires the development of marketing and communication activity that links to the council’s priority themes:

- Place – enhance wellbeing across communities.
- Economy - building an inclusive, green and resilient economy.
- Fair – nurturing bright, happy and health futures, from children to older people.
- Green – leading Renfrewshire to Net Zero.
- Living our values – making a difference together.

3.4 The Marketing and Communications Strategy (see Appendix 1) outlines the objectives and goals of the strategy and key messages. It also outlines a new development integral to delivering the strategy - a needs-based audience segmentation framework model using ‘life-stages’ to help build on the insight gathered to better understand our audiences and how best we reach them. It will guide our assumptions on which council services people are more likely to use and interact with. This provides a framework to develop a consistent approach to how we communicate with people and will be used as a planning tool for marketing and communications activity. The framework will be further developed and tested with audiences in 2024.

3.5 Consideration of audiences is undertaken at the outset of each individual project to ensure all communications and marketing activity is accessible, inclusive and reaches all parts of the community. In an increasingly digital communications landscape, particular consideration is given to those who may not have access to online channels to ensure we achieve the most effective reach and engagement possible. This includes consideration of online (website, social media, digital newsletters) and offline (posters, leaflets, local publications and local advocates) communications channels in order to ensure the most effective reach possible with audiences and is also informed by audience research and insight.

3.6 Implementing the council’s digital experience strategy and transitioning to a new council website is a significant project that will drive delivery of the marketing and communication strategy objectives by transforming website accessibility, the ease of finding council information online and accessing digital services and will have wider positive impact for future service design.

- 3.7 The strategy has been developed following a period of research and analysis which has included seeking and understanding resident attitudes in Renfrewshire, analysing service performance and considering wider societal research. It also reflects the ongoing requirement to demonstrate public trust in Renfrewshire Council. This is against a national (and international) backdrop of rising distrust in Government organisations, a lack of shared identity, systemic unfairness, economic pessimism, distrust of media and societal fears (Edelman Trust Barometer Global Report, 2023). It also reflects the fast-changing communications landscape.
- 3.8 While communication alone cannot build trust - behaviours build trust, effective communication and engagement have a significant role to play. By communicating effectively with staff, residents, media and partners, Renfrewshire Council can encourage greater self-service, promote understanding of local priorities, re-engage communities, challenge misconception, and help the council achieve its objectives.
- 3.9 The strategy will be reviewed annually and refreshed in line with emerging stakeholder needs and any emerging trends, with performance measured through a series of Key Performance Indicators, reported to Board through the service performance reporting cycle.

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## Implications of the Report

1. **Financial** – The actions identified to deliver the Strategy objectives will be met within existing budgets.
2. **HR & Organisational Development** – The Marketing, Communications and Events service has recently completed a service redesign under the Right for Renfrewshire programme, with a new service structure implemented in January 2024. The new operating model supports the delivery of this strategy and reflects the prioritisation of core and enhanced activities within existing resource.
3. **Community/Council Planning** – The strategy contributes to delivery of the Council Plan, by raising local awareness of the council's progress to achieving local priorities. Specifically, the strategy is directly linked to two main themes; **Place** – positioning Renfrewshire as a destination of choice, through visitor and investor marketing and major events and **Living our Values** - building Renfrewshire Council's brand and values, so people know and trust Renfrewshire Council and understand what it means to be part of 'Team Renfrewshire'.
4. **Legal** – None.
5. **Property/Assets** - None.
6. **Information Technology** – None.

7. **Equality & Human Rights** – Equalities considerations are factored into the research and planning stage of individual marketing and communication projects and campaigns and includes audience analysis, suitable channels and development and testing of appropriate content and messaging. This is reflected our goal of ‘well-executed, well-planned, accessible and inclusive communications that reach all parts of the community’. Specific actions within the strategy will improve equality of opportunity for some equalities groups, for example, a greater focus on accessibility of communications and inclusive communications, will improve engagement for residents with a disability and for residents who do not have English as a first language and the digital experience strategy will transform website accessibility for all residents. The strategy is an enabler to wider public engagement and for building trust in the Council as a whole, and equalities considerations will be embedded in delivery ongoing.
8. **Health & Safety** – None.
9. **Procurement** – None.
10. **Risk** – None.
11. **Privacy Impact** – The strategy is in line with corporate procedure regarding the use of Privacy Impact Assessments (PIAs) where necessary.
12. **Cosla Policy Position** – None.
13. **Climate Change** – None.

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**List of Background Papers:** None.

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**Appendix 1:** Marketing and Communications Strategy 2024-2027



# Marketing and communications strategy

2024 – 2027

[www.renfrewshire.gov.uk](http://www.renfrewshire.gov.uk)

Communication is one of the main levers Local Government has to affect change.

## The Marketing and Communications Strategy to 2027

The Marketing and Communication Strategy sets out the priority brand, marketing and communications actions for the council term until 2027, informed by situation analysis, audience research and the council plan. This is underpinned by a service operating plan which sets out the communication values and principles and the strategies that combine to deliver our objectives:

- **Communication values**—open and honest.
- **Communication principles**—on-brand (tone of voice, accessible and inclusive), user-centred design, data driven, single point of truth, trusted message carriers, always demonstrating council values.
- **Integrated and related strategies**—media protocol, digital experience strategy, internal communications and engagement strategy, social media strategy and protocol, Renfrewshire’s event strategy and Renfrewshire’s place brand. And corporate and national strategies—civil contingency act, equality and diversity strategy and Gaelic language plan.
- **Operating model**—the service will manage the council brand, deliver public relations, support the council board process, provide communications advice to the council’s Chief Executive, senior leadership team and senior Elected Members, and will deliver design and production services. This will also include integrated communications support that links digital experience, internal communications and engagement and supports the delivery of community engagement and campaign design and delivery.

## Aim of the strategy

Drive awareness of the council brand and demonstrate the council's ongoing progress to deliver the Council Plan (2023 to 2027)—to create a fairer Renfrewshire built on innovation, wellbeing and opportunity, and to promote opportunities for citizens to shape the services they need. This will require the development of marketing and communication activity that link to the council's priority themes:

- **Place**—working together to enhance wellbeing across communities.
- **Economy**—building an inclusive, green and resilient economy.
- **Fair**—nurturing bright, happy and healthy futures for all.
- **Green**—leading Renfrewshire to Net Zero.
- **Living our values**—making a difference together.

## Strategy vision

People have a greater understanding of what the council is doing to improve Renfrewshire, their neighbourhood and local services and they feel well informed. They find it easy to get the information they are looking for and to access council services. There is a strong sense of the council's community leadership role, and residents feel confident and able to have a say in decisions that impact on them. There is an enhanced reputation and position of influence for Renfrewshire Council locally, regionally and on a range of national platforms.

# Strategy objectives

- Inform all council stakeholders of our services, and our work to make Renfrewshire a better place to live, work, learn and have fun.
- Enhance the perception of transparency and accountability in council activities.
- Influence perceptions of Renfrewshire, locally, regionally and nationally.
- Encourage people to come and work at Renfrewshire Council.
- Engage our communities, partners, government, business and other stakeholders and encourage them to collaborate in shaping Renfrewshire's future.

We will do this by...

- Being on-brand across all channels and communications.
- Clearly explaining the council's policies and decisions.
- Delivering a new council website.
- Designing excellent content, based on user need and channel, and making information and correspondence accessible and helpful.
- Creating consistent and compelling messages that align with our objectives and resonate with our target audiences.
- Demonstrating the positive impact of services on people and communities and spotlighting the people who deliver those services.
- Ensuring council staff hear about council news directly from the council and are aware of the council's vision and values and how they contribute.
- Raising our profile within the public sector and other stakeholders throughout Scotland.
- Supporting and promoting public engagement—we asked, you said, we did.
- Using available data and insights to inform marketing and communication activity.
- Continually improving our free communication channels.

In delivering our objectives, we will achieve and contribute to the following six goals:

1. A recognisable and unified brand across all council services to stand as a mark of quality, trust, customer service and innovation.
2. Well-executed, well-planned, accessible and inclusive communications that reach all parts of the community.
3. Attracting talent to come and work with us.
4. A clear place leadership role (by genuinely engaging with and responding to residents).
5. Encouraging citizenship and protecting the interests of local people.
6. A good reputation and influence with all stakeholder groups.



## Setting the scene

Growth of data, changes in media consumption, fragile public trust, new technology and changing resident expectations are creating new opportunities and challenges for local government marketing and communications.

Universally, trust in public institutions and government continues to decline, driven by:

- **Economic anxieties**—all-time low in the number of people who think their families will be better off in five years.
- **Institutional imbalance**—business, not government, is now the sole institution seen as competent and ethical.
- **Class divide**—people in the top quartile of income live in a different trust reality than those in the bottom quartile.
- **Search for the truth**—a shared media environment has given way to echo chambers with a complex and diverse communications landscape.

Locally, uncertainty exists about the role of the council and the services we deliver. People want relevant, personalised communication and to be able to shape and influence decisions that impact local services and their community.

## Audience segmentation

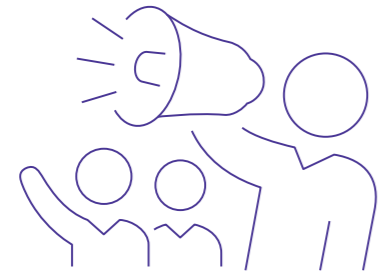
We have developed a needs-based audience segmentation framework model using life stages to help build on the insight gathered to better understand our audiences and how best we reach them.

Using ‘life-stages’ groupings for Renfrewshire citizens and communities helps us to make assumptions on which council services people are more likely to use and interact with. For example:

- A parent of school-age children will likely need to know about info relevant to schools and leisure facilities.
- A recent arrival to Renfrewshire may need to know about council tax or bin collections.
- A landowner/developer might look for info on the local development plan and planning process.

This provides us with a framework to develop a consistent approach to how we communicate with people. This framework will be used as a planning tool for communications and marketing activity and will be developed further in 2024.

We're in a great position to reach our audiences...

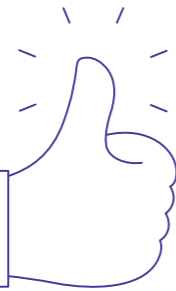


**290m+**

More than 290m combined opportunities to see and hear (OTSH) something about Renfrewshire Council

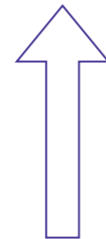
Our combined social following is

**72,487**



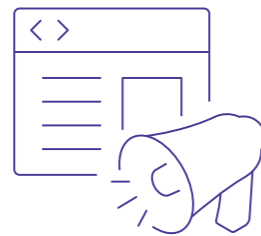
**+5%**

increase from March 2023



**30k+**

More than 30K people in Renfrewshire have signed up to our community newsletters



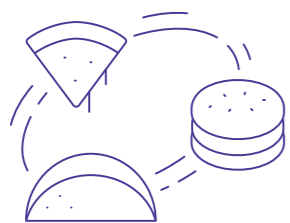
Renfrewshire Council is a member of 171 local community Facebook groups and are trusted to be our message carriers



**90%**

of employees found the staff info section of renfrewshire.gov.uk very helpful or helpful

We can reach audiences beyond Renfrewshire through our events programme.



**7m+**

Paisley Food and Drink Festival 2023  
OTSH were more than 7 million (7,560,440)



**19m+**

Paisley Halloween Festival 2023  
OTSH were more than 19 million (19,934,122)

We can reach people through a number of effective offline methods including posters, leaflets, letter drops and local publications.

## Key messages

We have created consistent and compelling messages that align with our objectives and resonate with our target audiences. These are designed to highlight the benefits of Renfrewshire Council's services to the community. The messages have been informed by the council plan, emerging organisational and local priorities and resident insights gathered through focus groups and surveys:

- **Place** (council as a connector)— we connect people, communities and partners to build a better Renfrewshire.
- **Place** (council as a landlord)— we create great places to call home.
- **Economy** (council in economic development)— we grow the talent to power future Renfrewshire.
- **Fair** (council as an education authority)— we deliver the best start for children and their families.
- **Fair** (council as a support)— we provide care and friendship and drive prosperity and equality in our communities.
- **Green** (council as a place leader)— we lead Renfrewshire's journey to Net Zero.
- **Living our values** (council as a workforce)— we work together, listen to feedback and use it whenever we can.
- **Living our values** (council as an employer)— we welcome every kind of brilliant.

# Actions

1. **Manage the brand consistently**—we will ensure all marketing and communication materials and channels maintain a consistent brand identity that reflects the council’s values, leadership role and tone of voice. This will be guided by a refreshed brand implementation plan and supported by a clear corporate narrative—what we stand for, why the council is important and our plan for the future.

2. **Deliver campaigns to build awareness of council policy and decisions and to promote council services.**

**Always on**—we will agree always-on campaigns to run consistently through the relevant channels including social media and digital advertising.

**Scheduled announcements**—a seasonal campaign calendar will be agreed to schedule known, annual PR activity.

**Strategic campaigns**—we will work with services to deliver strategic campaigns designed to do one of three things—to create awareness, to provide information or to encourage behaviour change. These will be agreed with Directors and the Corporate Management Team.

**Projects and initiatives**—we will support services to help promote specific projects and initiatives. We will use a triage process to prioritise this work.

3. **Deliver a new Renfrewshire.gov.uk**—we will deliver a new digital experience to make it very easy for local people, businesses and others who are interested in Renfrewshire to find the information they are looking for online and to help them successfully access online services and complete tasks first time.

4. **Prioritise employee engagement**—recognising that good internal communication and engagement is crucial to the strategy objectives, we will work with HROD colleagues to deliver internal campaigns that build an informed workforce who know what their impact is and who hear about council news first, to encourage employee pride and advocacy, and to ensure staff understand and embrace the council’s vision, objectives and values.

5. **Promote community engagement**—we will advocate for two-way communication with the community to encourage their active involvement in local initiatives and decision-making processes. We will work with colleagues in policy to develop and promote a model of good-practice and will support services to promote and design consultation and engagement, linking to the development of a new connected communities model.

6. **Design compelling, effective content**—we will develop high-quality, informative, accessible and inclusive content, following user-centred design principles, to meet the needs and interests of local people and reach all parts of the community.

7. **Continually improve communication channels**—informed by the media protocol, social media strategy (organic and paid-for) and digital experience strategy, we will continue to improve the council’s owned channels and ensure they are effective at reaching residents and stakeholders. We will also champion the use of inclusive communications principles across the organisation.

8. **Use data and insights effectively**—we will continually refine our audience segmentation framework using data and insights to better understand and segment residents and stakeholders. We will do this by using campaign evaluation and service data and insights gathered from user-led-design.

9. **Collaborate with other place partners and public sector organisations**—we will continue to raise our profile within the public sector and other stakeholders throughout Scotland through editorial PR, peer events and awards.

10. **Manage crisis communication**—we have robust processes and plans in place to respond effectively in case of unforeseen events or issues. There are clear and effective protocols for communicating during crises or emergencies, ensuring that accurate and timely information is disseminated.

# Evaluation

We will continuously assess and adapt marketing and communication strategy to reflect changing stakeholder needs and emerging trends. An annual review will be provided to the Corporate Management Team and the annual plan for the following year confirmed.

# Measurement

We use a variety of data analytics tools to measure the impact of individual campaigns:

- Website traffic to [Renfrewshire.gov.uk](https://www.renfrewshire.gov.uk) and [Paisley.is](https://www.paisley.is)
- Social media engagement and reach—council and [Paisley.is](https://www.paisley.is)
- Engagement with digital communications
- Opportunities to see or hear (paid-for)
- Media coverage—positive, negative and neutral coverage and the balance between positive and negative reach.
- Bespoke campaign outcomes—did people do what we asked them to do?

